

CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION /PLAN CONFORMANCE DOCUMENTATION

DOI-BLM-AK-F020-2015-0006-CX

A. Background

Proposed Action: Special Recreation Permit Renewal

Date of Proposed Action: Jan. 2015

Location: Primarily White Mountains National Recreation Area (WMNRA) including the Pinnell Mountain Trail (PMT)

Applicant: Joe Woodrome, U.S. Army, Outdoor Center

Serial Number: FF095642

Description of the Proposed Action

Proposed Action (includes a total of up to 11 annual trips)

The Fort Wainwright DFMWR Outdoor Recreation Center has applied for a Special Recreation Permit (SRP) to organize and lead up to eleven trips annually on BLM-managed lands over the next five years. The trips will primarily be within the WMNRA with one potential trip occurring within the SNCA along the PMT. All trips planned within the WMNRA are for day-use only. The proposed trip along the PMT will last three days.

Activities will include hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and all-terrain vehicle (ATV) riding. The Wickersham Dome area will be the focus of most activities while the Quartz Creek Trail will be used for all-terrain vehicle ATV riding and the PMT for backpacking. All trips will be limited to eight persons with the exception of the PMT trips which will be limited to 10 persons per trip. The purpose of these trips is to provide more local recreational opportunities to soldiers and their families on base. Even though trip leaders will be provided, most of the participants will be at a novice skill level and the applicant would like to use developed sites and facilities for the planned trips.

No off trail use will occur. Motorized vehicles will be in compliance with BLM weight limits for off-road vehicles. All equipment and transportation will be provided for by the Outdoor Recreation Center. Personal protective equipment appropriate to the type of activity (including helmets, gloves, eye protection, and appropriate clothing) will be used. A minimum of two trip leaders will accompany each trip. These trip leaders will be trained in first aid/CPR and “Leave No Trace” principles and ensure all personal protective equipment (PPE) is used. A description of each proposed trip is as follows:

- Wickersham Dome (Snowmobile) – Up to four one-day guided snowmobile trips out of the Wickersham Dome Trailhead annually. These trips will be limited to the Wickersham

Creek, Trail Creek, and Moose Creek Trails. Group sizes will range from a minimum of four persons to a maximum of eight persons

- Wickersham Dome (Cross-country skiing) – Two 1-day guided skiing trips out of Wickersham Dome Trailhead annually. These trips will be limited to the Summit Trail, Ski Loop Trail, and Wickersham Creek Trail. Group sizes will range from a minimum four skiers to a maximum of eight skiers.

Wickersham Dome (Mountain biking) – The proposal is for one day summer mountain biking trip out of the Wickersham Dome Trailhead annually. This trip will be to Lee's Cabin and back. Group sizes will range from four to eight persons.

- Quartz Creek Trail (ATV) – The proposal is for up to three 1-day ATV rides out and back on the Quartz Creek Trail annually. Group sizes will be four to eight persons. All equipment and transportation will be provided by the Outdoor Recreation Center.
- Pinnell Mountain Trail (Hiking) - The proposal is for one 3-day hiking trip annually along the Pinnell Mountain Trail. The group size will be four to 10 persons including trip guides.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name/Date Approved/Amended:

- Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision for the WMNRA, February 1986. Goal 3: Provide for multiple-use where compatible with primitive and semi-primitive recreation. Objective 2: Where compatible with recreation goals, permit multiple-use of resources on land classified as semi-primitive.
- Resource Management Plan/Record of Decision for the SNCA, February 1986. Goal 3: Manage lands consistent with multiple use principles and maintenance of environmental quality. Objective 6: Protect primitive recreation values ...2) along the Pinnell Mountain Trail.

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with 516 DM 11.9 E (9) (DOI 2004), which states: "Renewals and assignments of leases, permits or rights-of-way where no additional rights are conveyed beyond those granted by the original authorization."

The proposed action must be screened against the extraordinary circumstances found in 43 CFR 46.215 and listed below. Any “yes” finding requires that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement be prepared for the Proposed Action.

EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES	YES/NO
1) May have significant impacts on public health or safety.	No
2) May have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.	No
3) May have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.	No
4) May have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.	No
5) Might establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.	No
6) May have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.	No
7) May have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.	No
8) May have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.	No
9) Might violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.	No
10) May have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).	No
11) Might limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).	No
12) Could contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).	No

Recommendation

I have found that the Proposed Action is compatible with the White Mountain and Steese Resource Management Plan, and is an action that can be categorically excluded. The Proposed Action does not trigger any of the Extraordinary Circumstances found in 516 DM Chapter 2, Appendix 2. I recommend that the Proposed Action be allowed and that an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement is not needed.

/s/ Collin Cogley
Collin Cogley
Eastern Interior Field Office

2/25/2015
Date

Concurrence

I concur that the above action is in conformance with the White Mountains and Steese Resource Management Plans, does not meet any of the extraordinary circumstances, and qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion.

/s/ Chel Ethun Acting For
Lenore Heppler
Field Manager
Eastern Interior Field Office

2/25/2015
Date

Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CX review, contact Collin Cogley, Eastern Interior Field Office, at 907-474-2382.